

The Gospel of Mark tells us that as the women approached the tomb on that first Easter morning they were wondering – and maybe we should say they were worrying - about who would roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb. It turns out they needn't have worried. When they arrived, they discovered that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. This caught them by surprise. Finding a young man in the tomb, presumably an angel, caught them by surprise. The news of the resurrection caught them by surprise. That is the reality of Easter. It is full of surprises. Really, our God is full of surprises.

In many ways we love that. We love to celebrate Easter. We love to hear the story of the resurrection. Yet it seems like we really don't believe it. We still wonder how things are going to work out. We still worry about the future. We still think it is all up to us. But maybe it isn't. Maybe Easter really has changed everything. Maybe God has this all figured out. Maybe God has already prepared the way. Maybe death doesn't have the last word. Maybe we just need to take Easter more seriously.

If we do, we will find that Easter has a lot to teach us as individuals. Yes, we still need to take individual responsibility. Yes, we still need to have life insurance. Yes, we still need to go to the doctor. Yes, we still need to exercise and watch what we eat. But Easter teaches us that death does not have the last word, that our salvation is already assured, and that Jesus has already prepared a place for us. The bottom line: Easter assures us that there is hope and joy beyond what we expect and beyond what we imagine.

Easter also has a lot to teach our churches too. Although we worry about the future, how long we can keep the doors open, how long we can pay our bills, how long we can afford to have a pastor; Easter reminds us that God is already at work in our neighborhood and in our community, preparing for the future, stirring people up, softening their hearts, creating an openness and an eagerness to hear the gospel.

May Easter create an openness for the future in us as individuals as well as in our churches so that we can be transformed, put aside our worries, and enjoy the surprises God has in store for us all.